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ABSTRACT

"Freestyle," a new television series, is designed to expand career awareness of children ages 9 through 12 and reduce the limiting effects of sex role and ethnic stereotyping. The series is a product of the Television Career Awareness Project (TV CAP), a consortium of six agencies funded by a grant from the National Institute of Education (NIE). The project includes 13 half-hour television lessons, now available in video cassette format, and a guide for teachers. In addition, there is a curriculum guide and a mediated staff development program that includes plans and materials for teacher inservice meetings as well as a self-instruction program for teachers containing audio tapes and printed materials. The television programs stress the notion that personal interests and values are the proper bases for forming work preferences and that people should choose the work they do on the basis of their interests rather than on the sterotypes that others hold. The project exemplifies the expanding role of research in the development of curriculum and instructional materials. Names and addresses to contact regarding "Freestyle" products are provided. (Author/MLF)

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FREESTYLE: Reducing Barriers to Personal Success by Overcoming Sex-Role Stereotypes

by

Pat Seeley

EA 012 914

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FREESTYLE: Reducing Barriers to Personal Success by Overcoming Sex-Role Stereotypes

The question, "Can television, the very medium that critics contend perpetuates sex-role stereotyping, be used to overcome this obstacle to career aspirations?" "Yes!" said the thousands of children and their teachers who participated in the evaluation of FREESTYLE, the new television series on career awareness.

> "I think most people learned something by watching FREESTYLE. What I learned was not to stereotype anyone or anybody."
>
> Patty, age 11

> "It shows that no matter if you are male or female you can have any kind of a job you want and that makes me feel a lot better about my whole future."
>
> Mike, age 11

And teachers' recommendations included such statements as, "I think my students are much more aware of stereotyping and its results." "Many changed their way of thinking..."

The enthusiastic comments of the teachers and children and the successful results of the summative evaluation validate substanially the awards bestowed on this innovative television series. The honors received include:

Approval from the National Education Association, 1978, and Advancement of Learning Award, 1980

Approval from the National Principals' Association

Film Advisory Board Award

Bronze Medal Award from the Miami Film Festival

1978 Achievement Award from Action for Children's Television

Brotherhood Award from the National Conference of Christians and Jews

An "Emmy" for Outstanding Individual Achievement in Children's Programming

WHAT IS FREESTYLE?

The FREESTYLE curriculum project is designed to expand career awareness of children ages 9 - 12 and reduce the limiting effects of sex role and ethnic stereotyping. The project includes thirteen half-hour television lessons, now available in video cassette format; a FREESTYLE Guide for teachers; a Parent Guide* and a Children's Magazine.* In addition, there is a curriculum guide and a mediated staff development program which includes plans and materials for teacher inservice meetings as well as a self-instruction program for teachers containing audio tapes and printed materials.

FREESTYLE is a product of the Television Career Awareness Project (TV CAP), a consortium of six agencies funded by a grant from the National Institute of Education (NIE). The Office of the Los Angeles County Superintendent of Schools, a member of this consortium, was responsible for developing the curriculum which formed the basis for the television series and the supplementary print materials. This Office also produced the staff development program and implemented the program at school sites in eight states as part of the formative and summative research. The other members of the consortium included: Television Station KCET, television production; Science Research Associates, supplementary print materials; Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Southern California, formative research; Institute of Social Research at the University of Michigan, summative research; and East Los Angeles College Foundation, community outreach.

*Parent Guide and Children's Magazine no longer available.

RATIONALE

The curriculum platform forming the foundation for the FREESTYLE Project is based on three assumptions:

Predetermined sex roles both limit personal development and occupational attainment.

Participation in non-traditional activities will foster the development of interests, skills and knowledge, and provide opportunities for students to gain confidence in new areas of endeavor.

Successful participation in non-traditional activities may influence present aspirations and later educational and occupational attainment.

The decision to use television as a means of disseminating a career awareness program across the nation was a bold and forward-looking step by NIE. The pervasiveness of television makes it the ideal medium for reaching the persons that affect the expansion of children's interests and their awareness of the working environment -- parents, peers, teachers, and other significant adults. The television programs stress the notion that personal interests and values are the proper bases for forming work preferences and that people should choose the work they do on the basis of their interests rather than on the stereotypes that others hold.

A TIMELY PROJECT

FREESTYLE is well timed. Federal legislation involving the Equal Pay Act of 1963, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 and more recently Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, has opened the doors to equal opportunities for women and members of minority groups. The educational community has been slow to respond to the intent of this legislation. If children and youth are to be prepared to take advantage of widening

vocational and educational opportunities, changes in school curriculum will be needed. FREESTYLE is designed to meet the need for a career awareness program that responds to the new opportunities open to youngsters today and in the future. The focus on non-traditional interests and activities for boys and girls and the changing role of men and women in today's world is the special contribution of FREESTYLE to career awareness education.

THE ROLE OF RESEARCH

The FREESTYLE Project exemplifies the expanding role of research in the development of curriculum and instructional materials. The impetus for this project grew out of the studies by the Education and Work Group of the National Institute of Education. The studies revealed that a major problem limiting career awareness and thus, future career choices, is the influence of sex-role stereotyping and ethnicity as it is affected by sex-role stereotyping.

Stereotyping of interests and behaviors begins early in the life of an individual. It influences achievement patterns and aspirations. This, in turn, affects educational and occupational attainment. Both men and women are limited by sex-role stereotyping. While males generally have a broad range of career options open to them, they are often restricted from pursuing careers traditionally held by women. Women, in general, continue to be confined primarily to a narrow range of occupations due to a variety of personal, social, and economic forces.

A unique feature of the RFP that resulted in the FREESTYLE Project was recognition by NIE of the importance of research and evaluation to the success of the program. Sufficient funds were allocated for both formative and summative evaluation to provide the time and staff needed to conduct the research required to design the studies, collect the data, and analyze and interpret the results.

Responding to the problem as identified in the 1975 NIE Request for Proposal, members of the Curriculum and Instruction staff of the Office of the Los Angeles County Superintendent of Schools embarked on a year of curriculum research and development that began with an extensive review of pertinent literature. Surveys and interview of teachers, parents, and children in a variety of communities were conducted to determine the level of awareness of the problem and current interest in and knowledge about career education. Consultants in the fields of sociology, anthropology, psychology, human development, and race relations were employed to work with the curriculum writers in developing the platform for the program in specifying the goals and objectives, and in detailing the curriculum for the television series.

Formative research and evaluation conducted under the direction of Dr. Frederick Williams, at the Annenberg School of Communications, University of Southern California, helped to guide the development of the television series and the print materials. During the pre-production phase, the formative evaluation team worked with over 600 children in grades 4, 5, and 6 to survey the children's use of television, their attitudes and beliefs about sex role stereotyping and their understandings of career

opportunities. The review and reactions of this sample audience to script ideas, drafts of printed materials and segments of the video tapes helped to identify needed changes and corrections.

Using the results of pre-production research, three pilot television programs, each in a different dramatic format, were produced and tested in a nationwide evaluation effort. This study assessed the appeal of the programs, the degree to which the messages were comprehended, and the effectiveness of the various formats to achieve the objectives. A review and analysis of the results helped the FREESTYLE staff avoid costly errors in the final production of the television series and the non-broadcast materials.

Dr. Jerome Johnston, at the Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, directed the summative evaluation in five states to determine the impact of the final FREESTYLE program on the intended audience. The study was concerned with the effect of full use, limited viewing, and home viewing of the television series. Over 7,000 children ages 9 - 12 and their teachers participated in the evaluation.

The results indicated that FREESTYLE was indeed effective in achieving many of the educational objectives aimed at expanding career awareness and reducing sex-role stereotyping. The series was most successful in developing more positive attitudes toward boys and girls participation in non-traditional activities. Paralleling this change were positive changes in the audience beliefs about the competencies of boys in nurturing roles and in girls' ability to handle mechanical tasks and to take on leadership

roles. Changes were also made in accepting both men and women in non-traditional jobs. FREESTYLE was less effective in changing children's own interests.

Teachers expressed high enthusiasm for FREESTYLE. In responding to the summative evaluation questionnaire, seventy-one percent of the teachers indicated that they would recommend the series strongly or very strongly to other teachers at their grade level.

Comparisons were made between the relative effectiveness of FREESTYLE in classrooms where full use was made of the programs and in classrooms in which the use was limited to viewing only. In the full-use classrooms, teachers followed the FREESTYLE Guide to prepare appropriate introductory activities prior to each telecast and provided time after the telecast for discussion and selected extending experiences. Greater acheivement of the objectives obtained in the classrooms in which teachers integrated the viewing into a planned lesson than in the view-only classrooms. These results further substantiate the results of early studies in the field of instructional television regarding the importance of preparation for viewing and appropriate follow-up reinforcement in the use of television for learning.

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

The curriculum themes or content for this project center around three aspects of career awareness, namely:

Behaviorial skills needed for achievement in school and on the job

Pre-occupational interests and activities leading to career choices and

Adult work and family roles

The effects of sex-role stereotyping and ways to overcome such limitations are demonstrated within these curriculum themes.

Drama is the vehicle used to communicate the FREESTYLE messages. Each program plays out the adventures of a multi-racial group of young people (ages 9 - 11) as they deal with the problems they encounter in their middle-American suburban neighborhood. A career awareness theme selected from the curriculum planning guide sets the focus for every episode. As the drama unfolds, behavioral skills are modeled.

In designing the television programs, the potential message power of each visual and aural element within the drama is examined. The task is to construct a vehicle that relates, interprets, and communicates selected objectives, both cognitive and affective, in a meaningful and compelling way...in a way that conveys a sense of reality...that moves the audience in the direction of the desired outcomes.

Several dramatic devices are employed to communicate the FREESTYLE messages. *Warm, engaging, and attractive role models from differenct ethnic backgrounds are used to portray the feelings, attitudes, and behaviors desired.* Such a device increases the likelihood that the behaviors depicted will be approved and imitated by the audience.

Intrinsic rewards resulting from positive behavior are highlighted. The dramas portray the natural consequences, the "rewards and punishments," the role models experience resulting from their behavior. Positive ways of responding to the "punishment" of peer rejection, adult disapproval, or failure are modeled.

Communication Strategy (cont'd)

Verbal explanation and labeling, used sparingly, are embedded in the script dialogue to identify and reinforce the curriculum messages.

"Grease Monkey," a popular program, exemplifies the multi-faceted nature of the message content, the "instructional cargo," within one drama. The major goal is to encourage children to identify their own skills and to relate these to potential career choices without the restrictions of sex-role stereotyping. In this program, Chris, a young girl, applies for, obtains and performs satisfactorily on a summer job requiring the mechanical skills that traditionally have been considered beyond the interests as well as the capabilities of women. Through this drama, the audience receives information about the feasibility of pursuing interests and activities they may have thought inappropriate for their sex, while simultaneously learning about the behaviors needed for success in these activities in school and on the job. The young actors enact the behaviors involved in being assertive; applying for a job; taking the initiative and being self-directive in meeting job responsibilities; coping with peer pressure and with failure; and responding to the personal satisfaction of success and achievement.

To quote Norton Wright, the television producer of FREESTYLE:

> "The adventures focus on the drama of the ordinary -- that queasy, uncertain first day on the job; that lump-in-the-throat fear of taking a chance in a non-stereotypical activity; that super feeling when you've tackled a new and tough job and got it right. In the process, the series gives youngsters knowledge about specific adult non-traditional occupations and family roles, as well as about non-stereotypical behaviors they can use when they encounter a career-oriented opportunity or dilemma — in a summer job, at home, in school, or in extracurricular activites."

TEACHING WITH FREESTYLE

A central figure in the FREESTYLE communication system is the classroom teacher. The dramatic, stirring and emotionally charged television programs attract and hold students in rapt attention; however, unless students reflect on the meaning of the FREESTYLE messages and relate the attitudes, feelings, and behaviors observed to their own needs, the learning potential of the experience is diminished. The programs viewed become just another entertaining television series.

A FREESTYLE lesson begins with the preparation for viewing planned by the classroom teacher. An appropriate bulletin board display, local news article, or a pertinent question can initiate a discussion that sets the purposes for viewing the telecast. Students caught up in the moving action of the drama need such a focus, an organizer around which to cluster the information presented in the telecast. Listening to the discussion also helps the teacher assess the understandings and the preconceived notions held by the students about the issues to be dealt with on the television program. This assessment can serve as the first step in planning the post-telecast discussions and learning experiences.

The teacher is an active viewer during the telecast, participating fully in the experience, encouraging children to watch and respond, taking note of significant events for later discussion and clarification. Student assessment continues as the teacher observes their behavior during the telecast. Students' overt responses often give clues to their acceptance or rejection of the behavior of the characters in the dramas as well as to their comprehension of the ideas and information.

Each half-hour drama is divided into two fifteen-minute acts. The recommended use is to view one segment early in the week and the second segment a day or two later, allowing time between viewings for a variety of related learning experiences. The cliff-hanger ending of the first act of each drama is designed to stimulate discussion about the actions of the characters, analysis of the problems they face, and hypothesizing on how their problems can be resolved. The teacher's role is to facilitate the discussion by leading students to review the events that led to the problems, encouraging them to sift through their memory of the drama for evidence to support their statements and conclusions, and helping them to identify the concepts presented and to relate the ideas to their own lives.

The after-the-telecast discussion serves as the launching pad for such extending experiences as role playing, field trips, interviews, community study, and individual research. FREESTYLE themes can provide the focus for lessons in reading, writing, and mathematics, as well as science, physical education, art, and social science.

To achieve the objectives of the series, the teacher's responsibility is to plan a variety of reinforcing experiences, to provide a supportive environment in which to practice the desired behaviors, and to extend FREESTYLE learnings by integrating aspects of the program into the total curriculum.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT MAKES THE DIFFERENCE

The processes of modifying or changing teachers' perceptions and insights relative to their work with children are still an open area for study.

The life styles of the teachers, that is, their knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes constitute a frame of reference that they bring to the teaching task. An underlying assumption is that the significance of change is a direct function of how the change came about. Research findings show that teachers tend to be more open to change when they are surrounded with a support system in the form of *ideas for working with children, new knowledge which has application to the classroom situation, opportunities to observe and encouragement in the use of new approaches.*

The FREESTYLE Staff Development Program presents the local instructional leader with many of the components needed for such a support system. A Leader's Handbook provides detailed plans and many of the materials needed for a workshop to orient teachers to the FREESTYLE curriculum and teaching strategies. For individual study, teachers are supplied with Self-Instruction Mini-Module packets containing audio tapes and printed materials dealing with the issues that FREESTYLE addresses. In addition to the teaching techniques demonstrated during the orientation workshop, *"ideas for working with children"* are contained in the publications FREESTYLE GUIDE and in CURRICULUM FOR THE TELEVISION CAREER AWARENESS PROJECT "FREESTYLE."

"Opportunities to observe" are presented through the video tape TEACHING WITH FREESTYLE which is viewed during the workshop. This tape produced in fourth, fifth, and sixth grade classes shows teachers demonstrating ways to use FREESTYLE to achieve the project objectives. *"Encouragement in the use"* of new approaches comes about not only through the continuing assistance of the on-site instructional leader, but also as the teachers

themselves experience the enthusiastic response of the children and observe the positive effects of the FREESTYLE programs on children's attitudes and understandings.

Teacher reaction to the FREESTYLE Staff Development program has been most positive. A member of the summative evaluation team reported that both administrators and teachers were enthusiastic about the workshop and felt it to be one of the most effective inservice programs presented in the district. The recommendation published in the summative evaluation newsletter states, "Based on participant evaluations, the workshop plan and techniques...are a real plus for the FREESTYLE program and should probably be used by any district that is implementing FREESTYLE large scale."

FREESTYLE DISSEMINATION

The FREESTYLE television series will be made available one more time to PBS community stations, nationwide, during the spring of 1981. Those interested in viewing and recording the program for school use should contact their local PBS outlet for dates and times. Future broadcasts depend on the success of KCET, the parent station, in raising the funds to purchase the broadcast rights. School districts have the rights to use videotaped copies of the programs until October 1, 1983. Copies of the programs on video cassettes can be purchased from the Office of the Los Angeles County Superintendent of Schools.

FREESTYLE GUIDE, the teachers guide, is available in limited quantities from Station KCET and from the Los Angeles County Schools office. Science Research Associates, the producer of FREESTYLE GUIDE, have granted school

districts the right to reproduce and distribute the GUIDE for educational purposes. (See the conclusion of the article for names and addresses to contact regarding FREESTYLE products).

Despite the success of the project, the producers face a most frustrating realization. A project designed to take advantage of the advanced techniques of modern technology to communicate, lacks the resources to properly promote and disseminate the products developed...to deliver the program to the children and teachers in the schools of the nation for whom it was created.

A LOOK TO THE FUTURE

Regardless of the lack of funds for dissemination, FREESTYLE has proven again the power of television as an instructional tool. School districts in Alaska, California, North Dakota, Illinois, Michigan, New York, Arizona, and New Jersey have purchased copies of the video cassettes. As teachers begin to use the series for the second year, they will bring their own insights and experiences more fully to bear in shaping the learning opportunities they design for children. No doubt, by this time, librarians, resource consultants, and aides will have been involved in combing the district libraries and resource centers for pertinent films, books, and other materials to use in extending the FREESTYLE messages. Hopefully teachers, career education specialists, and other subject matter consultants will begin to work toward integrating FREESTYLE more fully into the ongoing curriculum. Teachers will find the program an impetus for involving parents in class activities and community studies. And those with responsibilities

related to Title IX, will have discovered the FREESTYLE program and will put their efforts into the implementing of FREESTYLE goals throughout the district. As educators begin to make the FREESTYLE program their own, the full potential of the project will be achieved.

FOR FREESTYLE INFORMATION

Formative Evaluation Reports:

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Curriculum Publications, Staff Development and Video Cassettes:

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Summative Evaluation Reports:

Dr. Jere Johnston, Project Director
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Box 1248
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106

Broadcast Schedules and Rights:

Ms. Ellie English
KCET - Community Television of Southern California
4401 Sunset Boulevard
Los Angeles, California 90027

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